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Analysis: Future of integration

Anthony Salamone and Elke Heins, Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh, discuss how the EU referendum result will impact the European Union.

(Videographer: Kara Johnston)

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Transcript

0:05 I'm Elke Heins. I'm a Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, in Social Policy. So, Elke, how significant is this moment in the EU's history? Well, it's of immense significance. It's clearly a historical turning point. Never before has a country left the European Union. More immediately, the significance is mainly felt on the economy, particularly on the financial markets - we've seen a dramatic drop in the pound overnight - and these kind of economic and financial turmoils are likely to continue, but it's also very likely that there will be very significant political ramifications. What's been the reaction from other EU Member States to the result of the referendum? Really, devastation. This is very, very sobering news.

0:50 And there's quite a bit of shock and disbelief, especially amongst EU elites. At the same time - although, the flaws of the European Union are also seen in other countries - but, there's still this widespread belief that the EU is guarantor of peace and it's the only way forward, to stand together in a very challenging world of globalisation, and so on. At the same time, of course, also in other EU countries, there is growing Euroscepticism, and there are political parties and movements who now kind of hope to also hold referendums in their own countries, as well. How likely are we to see those kinds of referendums in other EU countries on EU membership? It's quite unlikely.

1:36 In some ways, the UK was always the, sort of, most likely case - if any country was to leave the EU, your bets were probably on the UK, because there were always so many opt-outs. They were latecomers to the project. And there was always a very, kind of, special status. So, in this sense, we can't really say that the UK case is something that will be replicated in other countries. In other countries, there is still much more widespread support for the EU. But, of course, there are also differences between countries. So, the situation in the Netherlands is very different from the situation in Spain, for example.

2:17 But, a survey among the big European Member States has actually shown that there is still widespread support for the EU. And, if there is criticism of the EU, it also comes in different ways. It's not necessarily the same kind of grunting against the EU, as it was in the UK. It's on varied kinds of topics. And, in some countries, it's a much a sort of left-wing protest against the EU, and especially against the reaction with, like, austerity measures and everything in the face of the Eurozone crisis. So, it's a very different picture, overall. What's likely to be the short-term reaction from the EU to the referendum result?

3:02 I think the short-term reaction will be to show that they're not, kind of, giving up - and giving in to these calls to basically dismantle the whole European project altogether. The reaction will be, actually, to stand strong and united now. But, at the same time, of course, they need to acknowledge - this must be a wakeup call. They need to acknowledge that reform is necessary. In terms of the negotiations with Britain, now, about the next steps, I think it's very much in the interests of the EU to take these negotiations up as soon as possible.

3:38 And it's very important, and very much in the interest of the EU, that this happens in a very orderly fashion, and there is no kind of panic, and kind of very hysteric chain-reaction. What impact will the referendum have on the future direction of the European Union? It's, of course, difficult to tell. But, clearly, it must be seen as a sign that business can't go on as usual. So, some change is necessary. So, let's hope that there will be - this what now is really a shock and the crisis will be seen as an opportunity for democratic renewal, and maybe also for a stronger emphasis on the positive things that Europe has to give.

4:27 So, a much stronger kind of social Union. In recent years, with the financial crisis, the emphasis was so much on austerity and cuts and finances. And, I think we need a more positive vision of Europe again. And, yeah, hopefully this what now really is a shock - but once the shock is over, and the devastation is over, that there is a more proactive, more positive embracing of taking the European Union project forward.